

July 11, 2012

Andrew Fisher  
WI Department of Public Instruction  
Title I and School Support Team  
PO Box 7841  
Madison, WI 53707-7841

Re: Wisconsin Lead Turnaround Partner (LTP) Application 2012-2013

Dear Andrew:

On behalf of Project Director, Joseph Sassone, WestEd is pleased to submit the enclosed proposal for the above-referenced, Wisconsin Lead Turnaround Partner (LTP) Application 2012-2013.

WestEd is a tax exempt, not-for-profit, public agency specializing in educational research and development. We have a long-standing commitment to the field of education at all levels and have a combined experience base of 45 years of educational leadership. We have substantial qualifications in the technical areas called for in a project of this scope, and we bring to this effort our understanding, sensitivity, and commitment.

If you have any technical questions, please contact Joseph Sassone at 520.247.7111 or via email at [jsasson@wested.org](mailto:jsasson@wested.org).

For contractual questions, please contact the Contracts Management Department at 415.615.3136, ext.1 or via email at [contracts@wested.org](mailto:contracts@wested.org).

Regards,



Michael J. Neuenfeldt  
Director of Finance and Contracts  
WestEd

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cc: Joseph Sassone, Director of Integrated Services, ITP 4058

## Section 5: Application Narrative

## **1. Onsite Diagnostic Review**

### **a. Diagnostic review**

Any significant and rapid school improvement effort must start with a thorough analysis of what a school needs to succeed. To perform this analysis, WestEd turnaround experts have developed a systematic needs assessment protocol that focuses on ten characteristics of successful schools. WestEd collects and analyzes data from at least two sources for each of the ten characteristics. Among the sources are state and local student achievement data; teacher, staff, and family surveys; focus groups and interviews with key stakeholders; and relevant documents. Because the quality of instruction and curriculum are central to school success, trained WestEd observers conduct classroom observations as part of the needs assessment. The observations are intended to assess the fidelity of implementation and the efficacy of the curriculum, including core instruction. WestEd also utilizes a tool from the *National Center on Time & Learning* to audit the use of time in the instruction day. An audit with a WestEd tool, aligned with Wisconsin's vision and framework for Response to Intervention (RtI), is also conducted to determine the quality of universal screening and any RtI programs implemented at school sites.

WestEd produces a detailed needs assessment report with a preliminary set of recommendations for change. The findings and recommendations form the basis for the action plan that WestEd develops with its school partners. In terms of ensuring all students have access to the resources and supports needed to thrive, we have included a description of our approach in the next section, "recommendations to the school" (2b). In terms of monitoring the progress of the action plan, WestEd uses a proprietary online web-based planning and implementation tool called Tracker (formerly Planning and Monitoring Tracker), developed by WestEd. (Learn more about Tracker at [www.wested.org/tracker](http://www.wested.org/tracker).) Tracker is used by school staff, district staff, and the WestEd team to describe all elements of the action plan, to update progress, and to keep stakeholders informed about the status of the turnaround work. The action plan includes timelines, budget allocations, funding sources, and identifies specific implementation benchmarks that are monitored as the plan is put into practice.

WestEd staff prepare an annual evaluation report for its partner schools. While the implementation and monitoring reports describe the process of the turnaround effort, the annual evaluation report focuses on outcomes so that key stakeholders (e.g., local school board, parents, community members, and the state department of education) are apprised of the progress being made. The annual evaluation looks at two sets of outcomes: student outcomes and progress on the ten characteristics of high performing schools.

#### **b. Recommendations to the school**

In the needs assessment process, WestEd makes recommendations based on assets and needs found across the characteristics for highly effective schools. Given this, recommendations are made across the domains of running a high performing school, from school leadership and parent engagement, to instruction and professional development. In the examples attached to this application (see *Attachment B: Diagnostic Review Examples*) from New San Juan High School and Santa Ana School District, recommendations can be seen for both the district and school levels. Important to note, the examples provided include the approach used at WestEd up until June 2011. As of July 2012, WestEd has re-envisioned the characteristics that underlie our definition of highly effective schools. Whereas in the previous approach WestEd had seven characteristics, WestEd has expanded the framework to be more forward thinking, now possessing ten cutting edge characteristics detailed later in this proposal. Throughout this application, the most current approach is described.

In cases where challenges are found in addressing the needs of all students, instituting collaborative systems among educators and using data to make informed decisions about students, staff and resources, more is detailed in our approach below.

**Addressing needs of all students.** WestEd offers schools and districts a proven service on ensuring all students have access to the resources and supports needed to thrive. *Achievement for All* is an RtI process that improves achievement for students with disabilities and other students who struggle with learning. *Achievement for All* promotes a tiered intervention system based on



collaboration between general education and special education. The emphasis is on prevention of academic failure and interventions that accelerate learning. The key elements of *Achievement for All* are a standards-based instruction for all students, tiered interventions for both academic and behavioral challenges that are based on data analysis and assessment, and collaborative special education service delivery model. *Achievement for All* comprises interactive workshops offered in five modules and technical assistance reinforced with modeling and coaching. Based upon needs, WestEd can provide any or all of the five *Achievement for All* modules and customized technical assistance services. For more details on Achievement for all, including its research base, view the *Attachment C: Achievement for All Flyer*, or visit [www.wested.org/a4a](http://www.wested.org/a4a).

**Collaborative systems and using data to make informed decisions.** In cases where collaborative systems need to be built around addressing student achievement and collaborating to use data in decision-making, WestEd's approach includes districts and schools developing a shared conceptual understanding, vocabulary, and set of materials to collaborate effectively in learning teams such as Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) that use data to make informed decisions.

WestEd staff has extensive experience in curriculum, assessment, standards-based instruction, and leadership at the school, district, and state levels. The training program is customized to fit the needs of the district and/or school to implement high quality, job-embedded professional development for teachers and administrators. The goal of the training is to build capacity for the leadership team at the district and/or school level to be able to fully implement the accountability system to improve student achievement rapidly. See *Attachment D: Local Accountability and Professional Development Series Brochure* for more details on the program, or go to [www.wested.org/lapds](http://www.wested.org/lapds).

## **2. School Reform Experience and Framework**

### **a. Prior experience and success**

WestEd has helped numerous low-performing districts and schools significantly increase student performance. With over a decade of experience serving schools across the country, support has been provided in a broad array of settings from small rural districts to schools in large urban districts.

WestEd's experience in turning around low-performing schools includes recent efforts in Arizona's Creighton School District. The 2012-13 school year will be WestEd's fifth year supporting Creighton School District's turnaround effort in kindergarten through grade eight (K-8) levels in partnership with the Ellis Center for Educational Excellence. In the first year, WestEd conducted a full needs assessment, developed an action plan to build curriculum and assessments in reading, and trained staff in effective classroom practice. Based on the 2007-2008 Arizona LEARNS<sup>1</sup> school achievement profiles, of the district's nine schools, only two were identified as "Performing," six were identified as "Underperforming," and one was identified as "Failing to Meet Academic Standards." Between the first and second year, WestEd helped develop curriculum and assessments for English learners (ELs), mathematics, and writing, and provided training for principals on leading professional learning communities and using data to plan intervention classes. After only one year of partnering with WestEd, all district schools were identified as "Performing" or "Performing Plus." Additionally, the performance of ELs in the district increased significantly, as evidenced by the large increase of ELs who were reclassified into core classrooms.

WestEd provided district and school site staff with a full menu of ongoing professional development and technical assistance focused on improving instruction, curriculum, and assessment systems in Creighton. WestEd also provided support with implementation of data systems, allowing

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<sup>1</sup> Arizona LEARNS is the Arizona Department of Education's school accountability system that measures school performance based on student achievement, including student performance on the statewide test. The Arizona Department of Education compiles an annual achievement profile for each public school and publishes that information as a rating system for schools.

schools to more effectively use assessment as a tool to sustain their reform efforts. As a result of these initiatives, and the hard work of the staff, academic progress in Creighton has continued tremendously every year since 2008-09. For graphical details on Creighton and more examples of WestEd's evidence of success, see *Attachment E: Evidence of Success*.

#### **b. Organization's framework**

Four key principles, stakeholder support, effective implementation, reciprocal accountability and growth mindsets, guide WestEd's school transformation and turnaround work. WestEd believes these principles are necessary to ensure significant and rapid school improvement.

**Local stakeholder support is essential.** Making schools better for students requires adults to act differently. This demands high levels of commitment and trust among school staff, district staff, families, and the school's external partners (Bryk et al., 2010; Johnson & Asera, 1999; Zargarpour, 2005). Parents, often left out of school improvement efforts, must understand and believe in the improvement plan and the people executing it (Comer, 1995). Their interests and their expectations for their children must be considered as the strategic plan is developed. They must also receive necessary support and guidance so they can participate meaningfully in their children's education.

**Effective implementation is key.** While a well-crafted action plan, based on a thorough assessment of needs, is crucial, it must be implemented effectively for the goals of the plan to be achieved. Research, along with our extensive experience working in schools, tells us that many school improvement plans fail to achieve their goals because the plans were not fully or effectively implemented. WestEd's approach to implementation is based on the work of Dean Fixsen and his colleagues at the National Implementation Research Network, who have identified the key stages of implementation that must be executed to achieve the desired outcomes. According to Fixsen's research (2005), a majority of staff must implement evidence-based intervention on a daily basis (that is consistent with the research-based properties of the intervention design) for there to be any impact on student achievement. Districts



and schools that complete this full implementation effort, while following the program's guiding principles, will make powerful, system-wide improvements.

**Mutual accountability matters.** The concept of "reciprocal accountability" builds on the understanding that to dramatically and quickly improve student learning requires a community-wide effort in which all stakeholders, the principal, teachers, other school and district staff, parents, and WestEd as the partner take individual and joint responsibility for executing the improvement plan. All people involved must be held accountable for meeting high, clearly defined expectations. Too often, accountability operates punitively from the top down, but when accountability is reciprocal, all parties are responsible to each other and to achieving their common goals. In our partner schools and districts, all staff, parents, students, and external support providers must work together to identify expectations for performance for each group and individual. Everyone's work must be evaluated so that appropriate action can be taken to improve when performance is lacking (Bryk et al., 2010; Elmore, 2000; Futerick, 2010).

**Growth Mindsets at all levels are necessary.** The final key principle is ensuring that there is a growth mindset at all levels of a school. This means that there is a ubiquitous mindset of believing that rapid and sustainable growth is possible for the school and its students. When a person has a growth mindset, she or he possess a belief that potential is not static and that people and organizations can grow from effort, persistence, and practice (Blackwell, Trzesniewski, & Dweck, 2007). In order to achieve most desired outcomes at schools, not only do students need to possess growth mindsets about their own abilities, so too do school boards, district leaders, school leaders, teachers and parents. This shared belief is an essential first step in supporting schools to reach their rigorous goals and targets for school reform. WestEd supports schools in addressing the beliefs about what is possible if necessary, given this can be a key barrier to expected growth.

WestEd's framework defining highly effective schools is forward thinking in that it looks to ensure schools are able to adapt to the ever-changing needs of schools. It takes into account essential topics in school reform such as defining a framework for excellent teaching, addressing Common Core State



Standards roll out, using time effectively and efficiently, and adapting to the ever-changing instructional technology needs of districts and schools. Although WestEd's characteristics are listed below, for full descriptions, see *Attachment F: WestEd's Characteristics and Elements of Highly Effective Schools*.

#### **WestEd's Ten Characteristics of Highly Effective Schools**

1. Effective School & District Leadership
2. Highly Committed & Qualified Staff
3. Rigorous Curriculum & Targeted Assessments
4. Quality Instruction
5. Support for Quality Instruction: Professional Development
6. Healthy School Culture
7. Efficient Use of Fiscal Resources
8. Efficient Use of Technological Resources
9. Effective & Efficient Use of Time
10. Powerful Engagement of Families & Communities

#### **c. Organization's activities within a priority school over a four-year period**

Following the comprehensive needs assessment each district or school builds a stakeholder-supported timeline of adopted initiatives. WestEd embraces the notion that early wins are necessary to accelerating improvement. WestEd supports districts and schools to institute changes in the first 30 days that are noticeable, and that represent early evidence of school reforms taking hold. Parallel with the early wins, WestEd supports schools in action planning key initiatives on 90-day, 180-day, and annual cycles derived from the needs found in the district or school. Through the implementation monitoring of the initiatives, WestEd supports intervention to realign plans and in some cases to accelerate changes intended to take place at a later time. Since each school is unique and so too are their needs, the recommended activities for schools in Wisconsin cannot be highlighted for certain. However, a sample timeline has been provided from schools WestEd has supported in the past. To view the sample timeline, go to *Attachment G: Sample Activities Timeline*.

#### **d. Theory of action**

WestEd's theory of action for rapid and significant school improvement involves guiding a school through four distinct phases: 1) needs assessment; 2) action planning; 3) implementation and monitoring; and 4) evaluation.

**Needs assessment.** The intent of the needs assessment phase is to provide the school, district staff, and WestEd with an objective and comprehensive view of the school. This view, coupled with what the school and district staff know about the school's strengths and weaknesses, provides the basis for action planning.

**Action planning.** Using the results from the needs assessment, WestEd collaborates with district and school staff in developing an action plan for turning around the school. The plan identifies goals, objectives, strategies, tasks, budgets, timelines, and the people responsible for completing specific tasks.

**Implementation and monitoring.** Using the implementation benchmarks established and agreed upon in the action plan, WestEd staff closely monitor whether tasks and objectives are completed as planned. As mentioned previously, progress is monitored using PMT, WestEd's web-based planning tool, which produces on-demand reports for the school's leadership team. Analysis of these reports allows for increased focus on uncompleted tasks and for midcourse modifications to the action plan when necessary.

**Evaluation.** WestEd staff prepare an annual evaluation report for its partner schools. While the implementation and monitoring reports describe the process of the turnaround effort, the annual evaluation report focuses on outcomes so that key stakeholders (e.g., local school board, parents, community members, and the state department of education) are apprised of the progress being made. The annual evaluation looks at two sets of outcomes: student outcomes and progress on the seven characteristics of high performing schools.

The kind of dramatic change required to transform low-performing districts and schools requires high levels of trust, collaboration and strong support from teachers, school administrators, parents, the community, and district staff. The WestEd Turnaround Team continuously works with the school/district to build the capacity for making data-driven decisions. Venues are established to regularly and collaboratively analyze student performance and other relevant data to monitor progress and make informed programmatic and academic improvement decisions.

**e. Organization's experience with turnaround strategies**

WestEd has over a decade of experience turning around persistently low performing districts and school across the country. In *Attachment E: Evidence of Success* (first mentioned in 2c), further details are provided on recent examples that contribute to our proven track record. In addition, the brochures in the attachments give more details on services we provide around RtI, training teachers and leaders, and building family and community engagement. WestEd currently serves as the lead turnaround partner for School Improvement Grant (SIG) schools across the country, bringing with it proven experience around all of the SIG reform models and federally required interventions. One key example is WestEd's work with seven K-8 schools in Stockton, California. Funded by SIG, WestEd's partnership with Stockton is focused on turning around these low-performing schools. WestEd's entire approach is designed through the lens of building a healthy school culture, as WestEd understands that every facet of the organization impacts culture bi-directionally. WestEd's expertise in the area of safe and supportive schools is well known through its Health and Human Development Program, which designed and implements the California School Climate Survey, which provides technical assistance to schools, districts, and state agencies on safe and supportive schools, and serves as the lead for the Safe and Supportive Schools Grants for California and Louisiana.



### **3. Approach to Working with School District and Staff**

#### **a. Organization's approach to negotiating with district offices**

When WestEd partners with a district, complete autonomy is maintained at the district level for governance, budgeting, instructional design, staffing, professional development, and student supports. WestEd takes the role of partner, providing critical feedback and suggested reforms to make rapid and dramatic improvements. WestEd does not take the role of managing any district functions. Through the needs assessment process, WestEd guides district leadership to prioritize recommendations the district selects based on the assets and needs found in the district. WestEd then supports the district in action planning and implementing the recommendations so that they are fulfilled.

In *Attachment B*, the curriculum and district office functions review for Santa Ana Unified serves as an example. Like in all district partnerships, WestEd assumes no authority over decision-making. WestEd served as a partner reviewer and facilitator of district stakeholders selecting WestEd recommendations to put into action across the district. Thus, WestEd's district support does not require any negotiations over autonomy.

#### **b. Working with district leadership and central office staff to improve district policies and practices**

Similar to what was stated above in Section 3a, WestEd works as a partner with the district to work through the needs assessment findings and to develop the action plan to move forward. Once the action plan is in place, WestEd works intensively with district and school leaders on governance, budgeting, instructional design, staffing, professional development, and student supports. WestEd and the leadership team meet regularly to review Tracker reports on the progress of implementing each area of the action plan.

In addition to the sample district review enclosed from Santa Ana Unified (see *Attachment B: Diagnostic Review Examples*), each success story (see *Attachment E: Evidence of Success*) illustrates that improved district policies and practices ultimately yielded tremendous improvements for students.

**c. Strategy for building capacity**

WestEd serves as a critical thought partner in working with district leaders to collaboratively bring about intended improvements. Professional development and coaching is employed by WestEd to build the capacity of school and district leaders, so that both the school and district are positioned well at the end of the partnership to sustain improvement.

**4. Approach to Required Responsibilities****a. Activities in the school and district during the first six months**

*Attachment G: Sample Activities Timeline*, (initially referred to in Section 2c) includes a sample activity itinerary detailed for a school. Again, the approaches and timeline recommended for districts and schools are collaboratively prioritized during the action planning process and are uniquely based on the current context of each individual district and school.

## 5. Instructional Strategies (RtI, CCSS, and Extended Learning Time)

### **a. Curriculum and assessment program**

As stated in Section 2b of this proposal, WestEd utilizes a defining characteristic for high quality schooling of ensuring partners have a *Rigorous Curriculum & Targeted Assessments*. At partner schools, WestEd ensures that:

- A coherent standards-based curriculum is in place and implemented across grade/subject levels to support the learning needs of all students in all courses.
- The high school or middle school curriculum offers rigorous and relevant academic and career technical education courses that includes an adequate number of Honors, Advanced Placement, and International Baccalaureate classes or other college preparatory classes to meet the needs of the student population. All students are encouraged and permitted to participate in these courses.
- Targeted and tiered interventions are in place to ensure success for all students.
- Assessments fully engage students in cognitively complex tasks. Assessment system requires short-, medium-, and long-cycle assessments. Instruction and assessment fully engage students in cognitively challenging tasks.
- Teachers routinely use assessment results to determine students' instructional needs and to target instructional planning, delivery, and differentiation. Credit recovery options are available for all students who need them.
- High school exit exam preparation classes and/or other supports are in place so that all students graduate. All students are provided support and assistance to take college entrance examinations.
- For high schools, all students receive adequate assistance with college and career planning. All students receive support to ensure they fulfill their college entry requirements.

WestEd knows from research and decades of experience that a one-size-fits-all approach does not work. That's why in many cases our partner schools select implementing WestEd's Local Accountability Professional Development Series (LAPDS).

The WestEd team customizes the training to address individual strengths and needs. While the implementation may differ based on each district's or school's unique characteristics, the LAPDS process remains the same. The services are based on the best available research in mastery learning theory and the alignment of curriculum, lesson planning, instruction, and assessment. This alignment provides students with specific, immediate feedback and multiple opportunities to demonstrate proficiency of the academic standards. The focus is to build district and school capacity to fully implement an accountability system that will rapidly improve student achievement.



The LAPDS system uses rigorous standards and assessments fully aligned with the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) item specifications and the blueprints of the district's or school's state assessment. The WestEd team has extensive experience with early adoption of Common Core State Standards across the country. Grade-level groups or subject teams work together to collaborate on setting the instructional calendar and develop common formative assessments for the same subject. In addition, site administrators and all support staff who work in classrooms should attend with the appropriate grade level/subject groups. View *Attachment D: Local Accountability and Professional Development Series Brochure* (first referred to in 1b), or visit [www.wested.org/lapds](http://www.wested.org/lapds).

**b. Strategies to implement flexible scheduling and to create extended learning time**

As stated in Section 2b, *Effective & Efficient Use of Time* is a key characteristic WestEd employs to define high quality schooling. In partner schools, we work to ensure that:

- Adequate time and space are available for professional collaboration, analysis of student performances, and related data; the time is used effectively.
- "Non-purpose time" is not excessive. ("Non-purpose time" means a shift from its intended purpose [i.e., either academics or non-core academics] to other purposes.)
- Adequate time is allocated for all academic subjects (i.e., math, ELA, social studies, and science).
- Adequate time is allocated for enrichment activities.
- Length of school day, bell schedule, and school calendar are optimized.

WestEd utilizes the knowledge and strategies generated by the *National Center on Time & Learning* to guide partners in using time effectively and efficiently in a non-prescriptive manner that works for the district and school culture contexts. Utilizing a *use of time* audit in the comprehensive needs assessment, WestEd identifies areas where time is already available in the school calendar and daily schedule that is in need of being more efficiently used. WestEd works with districts and schools to identify best practices for improving the use of this available time before strategies for expanding the use of time are considered.

Once the traditional school day is improved in terms of efficiency, WestEd works with districts and schools to find the best approach for expanding time for professional development, professional collaboration, and student learning. WestEd understands this is a topic in need of broad stakeholder

support given the nuances of developing Memorandums of Understanding to supplement Collective Bargaining Agreements. WestEd has successfully served as a support in gaining such support within districts and schools in the past and is poised to do so within Wisconsin to ensure districts and schools have the time needed to reach all missions and goals.

**c. Student transitions throughout the grade levels**

Improving pathways for students as they transition grade level to grade level, and beyond K-12 schooling, WestEd uses the needs assessment process and RtI audit to present assets and needs around student pathways. Included in implementing structures to ensure students move on to the next grade level with adequate preparation, WestEd supports schools in developing college-going cultures at all grade levels. In order to do this effectively, schools require true partnerships with local community colleges and four-year institutions. WestEd has extensive experience building relationships with higher education institutions that bring them into the schools to not only engage students on going to college at each grade level, but to train teachers on understanding what students need in order to be fully prepared. WestEd has also facilitated partnerships that bring students on to college campuses early in their careers to expose them to what it takes to get to and through college.

## **6. Staffing and Professional Development**

### **a. Rigorous performance evaluation system for teachers and principals**

WestEd's approach includes the following two characteristics: 1) *Effective School & District Leadership* and 2) *Highly Committed & Qualified Staff*. To this end, WestEd works to ensure that district and school leadership, and teacher quality are provided at the level necessary to reach rapid and sustainable change at priority schools. WestEd ensures the following in partner schools:

#### **Effective School and District Leadership**

- The leadership team models and facilitates the development of a mission and vision of learning that is consistently applied by the entire school community.
- The leadership team sustains a school culture and instructional program that is conducive to powerful learning for all students and adults.
- School and district leaders manage school operations and allocation of resources in support of the school's mission and vision.
- The leadership team at the school and district office collaborate with families and community members and mobilizes community resources to improve student outcomes.
- When appropriate, the leadership team collaborates with local and district labor leaders to ensure adequate teaching and leadership conditions.
- The principal and leadership team receive clear guidance, quality professional development, and adequate support from the district office.
- The leadership team collects, analyzes, and makes use of relevant data to improve student learning.
- The leadership team receives regular feedback from stakeholders regarding their performance.
- Specific, measurable student achievement goals are established for each grade level and for all courses.
- The principal conducts effective formal evaluations of teachers that complies with district evaluation policies. The principal takes appropriate steps (e.g., peer assistance and review) when teachers earn unsatisfactory evaluations.
- Additionally, at the district office, WestEd ensures that leaders conduct useful formal and informal evaluations of the principal and assistant principals on a regular basis with the agreed upon evaluation tool.

#### **Highly Committed & Qualified Staff**

- Staff demonstrate a commitment to the mission and vision of the school and working collaboratively as a team.
- Teachers, classified staff, and principals are the beneficiaries of formative and summative evaluation systems that focus on building capacity and growth.
- Teacher recruitment, screening, selection, and transfer processes ensure a high-quality team of educators.
- Labor-management leaders work collaboratively to ensure staff are assigned in a manner that maximizes positive student outcomes.



- Teachers (new to teaching and veterans) benefit from an induction program that includes orientation to the operations, culture, and expectations of the school.
- Teachers are assigned to courses and grade levels for which they have appropriate qualifications (i.e., subject matter knowledge and pedagogical training).
- Data on the school's teaching conditions and professional development are collected regularly from staff and used for school improvement.
- Exit interviews are conducted with all staff leaving the school and the data is used to improve teaching conditions.

When a district or school is in need of developing a rigorous principal and/or teacher evaluation system, partners are taken through a facilitated process of getting stakeholder input and buy-in on a tool that both includes qualitative and quantitative data. WestEd believes that evaluations should include observational data on a research validated tool that defines great leadership and great teaching and an agreed upon weighting of valid student performance measures. WestEd does not advocate for any one framework, nor do we promote any specific weighting of test data. However, partners are guided to building the best system that ensures the above two characteristics are fulfilled.

Also, for schools to deliver a rigorous standards-based curriculum and simultaneously address the academic needs of students, administrators, instructional coaches, and teachers, stakeholders need to understand effective research-based instructional practices and collaboratively discuss, plan, and examine classroom instruction on an ongoing basis. To examine classroom instruction, WestEd utilizes and has adapted Danielson's (2011) *Framework for Teaching*, which identifies research-based characteristics that have been documented as promoting improved student learning. WestEd can align and support all district adopted instructional frameworks used to define excellent instruction to WestEd's definition in this characteristic.

#### **b. Training and professional development needs of school staff**

WestEd ensures partner schools provide *Support for Quality Instruction*. In order to provide rigorous, standards-based instruction to all students, teachers must consistently use research-based teaching practices and work collaboratively toward student achievement. Ongoing and intensive professional development that provides effective and relevant tools and knowledge pushes all educators to

reflect critically upon their practice in a continuous manner, holds them accountable for learning acquired, and is more likely to “bridge the gap” between standards and achievement.

WestEd works with district and school leadership to ensure that effective professional development is offered to all staff that:

- Organizes adults into collaborative learning communities, prepares teachers to use the skills and knowledge necessary to collaborate, focuses on teacher improvement to improve student achievement, and is aligned with other reform initiatives at the site.
- Includes high quality professional development for site administrators, counselors and instructional coaches that is aligned with teacher professional development and provides ways to help them accomplish instructional leadership goals and operational tasks. professional development should also ensure vertical alignment across grade levels and horizontal alignment within departments and Small Learning Communities (SLCs).
- Includes high quality professional development for counselors, social workers, parents, and other non-classroom personnel to help them accomplish instructional leadership goals and operational tasks.
- Is ongoing and intensive, job-embedded, and includes both frontloading of new knowledge and opportunities for practice with structured time for coaching, reflection, and feedback. Teachers are regularly observed informally and receive useful feedback from well-prepared observers. Observations and professional development objectives are aligned. The plan has adequate resources for it to be prioritized, monitored, and coordinated.
- Applies knowledge about adult learning, including acknowledgement and integration of teachers’ prior knowledge and experiences and day-to-day classroom realities.
- Deepens educators’ content and pedagogical knowledge and prepares them to implement instructional strategies grounded in solid theory and empirical research to meet the academic learning needs of all students, with a specific focus on the learning needs of special populations, including English learners students with disabilities, and students from low socio-economic backgrounds.
- Encourages and promotes interdisciplinary teaching by providing support and professional development to teachers to effectively implement all aspects of the common core state standards.
- Includes a coherent, year-long and multi-year professional development plan with teachers involved in its development and evaluation. The plan applies research on change and sustains support for implementation of professional learning for long-term change.
- Prepares educators to use disaggregated student data from screening, formative, and diagnostic assessments that are standards-aligned to determine student learning and adult teaching priorities, to monitor student progress, and to help sustain continuous school improvement.

### **c. Evaluating the fidelity of implementation, quality, relevance, and utility of professional development**

A core principal of WestEd’s approach is a *Focus on Implementation*. Through the lens of The National Implementation Research Networks stages of implementation and implementation drivers (Blase, Dyke, Fixsen, Bailey, & Graham, 2012), WestEd begins evaluating the fidelity of practices



implemented, their quality, relevance and utility during the needs assessment process. Once existing practices are assessed for assets and needs, and recommendations are made and an action plan is developed, WestEd provides partners with *Implementation Monitoring and Support* throughout the partnership.

WestEd and the partner school and district develop a set of tools for assessing the quality of professional development implementation based on the action plan collaboratively developed. When written, the measures for evaluating effectiveness of the strategies are also created. This can include survey data collected after whole group and PLC development, observational data on the quality of instructional practice implementation, and the use of formative test data. This data is analyzed to determine the effectiveness of specific strategies learning in professional development and to make decisions about further interventions when implementation activities are in need of strengthening.

**d. Determining the effectiveness of the existing school leadership team**

Please refer to Section 6a above.

**e. Recruiting, hiring, and developing leaders**

WestEd understands that marketing is half the battle in courting great leaders to serve at priority schools. WestEd has experience conducting national searches for some of the most persistently failing schools in the country. To this end, how the opportunity is messaged determines the type of candidates that enter the hiring pool. Once a highly qualified pool of leadership candidates has been established, the screening process is key to ensuring the right leader is selected. WestEd asserts that the decision should be made by a panel of broad stakeholders and not solely by district leadership. WestEd recommends that at least one student, parent, and teacher representative serve on the interview and selection panels, where allowable under any Collective Bargaining Agreements in place.

WestEd has an extensive interview protocol mapped to WestEd's ten characteristics of highly effective schools. The questioning extends beyond other existing protocols to broadly investigate through



the ten characteristics the character, competency, and commitment of a potential leader. Available upon request, this protocol can be tailored to meet the needs of any district or school.

Here are a few sample questions we have used:

- Describe a time when you felt very successful or proud of something you accomplished at work.
- Describe a situation when you set an expectation for someone else's work and held that person accountable for adhering to that expectation.
- Describe a time when you led a group or team of people to successfully accomplish an important task.
- Describe a situation when you had to solve a problem that required the use of complex data and explain how you obtained and used the data.
- Describe a situation when you had to solve a problem where there was significant disagreement among staff about how the problem should be solved.
- Tell us how you have worked with parents to ensure strong involvement in their children's education.
- Tell us how you have worked with a school's Site Council to ensure the school's budget is aligned with the school's academic goals.

Once a great leader is selected, WestEd understands that all leaders require high quality development. WestEd can work with districts to develop comprehensive and differentiated leadership training and support programs for school leaders. Additionally, WestEd's staff is comprised of experienced school leaders who serve as personal coaches to partner school leaders throughout the partnership term. The WestEd coach will set up regular formal coaching sessions with the school leader. In addition, the WestEd coach and school leader participate in all professional development experiences provided to teachers. This is done not only to model how leaders should conduct high quality development for teachers, but also to build leadership capacity within the school leadership team that can thrive in WestEd's absence.

**f. Designing and implementing a fair and consistent method to evaluate staff members' ability to effectively participate in the school reform plan**

When the action plan for reform is written by the school leadership team, following broad stakeholder recommendation prioritization, action steps and tasks are assigned to people with the capacity and ability to fulfill them. Where support is needed at the district and school to build the talent and capacity for a reform to be implemented during the four-year partnership, WestEd will conduct the

development needed to ensure district and/or school members can sustain the action or task beyond WestEd's presence.

To evaluate the quality of staff participation in the action plan, WestEd recommends holding bi-weekly leadership team meetings to review Tracker system reports on who has fulfilled their duties and who has not. When gaps are noticed early in the fulfillment of the plan, the team is guided by the WestEd turnaround lead in asking questions about why it did not happen, and what needs to be done to remedy the issue. This process exposes the level of execution of all staff members in regards to doing their part in making the plan thrive. WestEd has found this process exposes who needs further support and guidance on the team and who may need to have less responsibility in ensuring the action plan is fully successful.

## 7. Positive and Safe Learning Environments

A key characteristic to WestEd's approach is ensuring partners have a *Healthy School Culture*. The school community should build an intentionally crafted, safe, positive, supportive, academically focused, and culturally responsive school culture. The learning environment should include students being explicitly taught not just the skills of being a strong student, but the dispositions, habits, and traits highly effective, successful adults possess. Schools work to manage through facilitative adult styles that build student leadership and good decision making, as opposed to directive discipline that seeks compliance. Celebrations in the school should include recognitions of personal improvement and growth, not just high academic achievement. Adults and students alike should have trust in one another and work collaboratively to reach school and individual goals. To this end, WestEd works intensively to ensure that:

- All staff communicates high expectations for all students and share a belief that all students can be college and career ready. No excuses are made for any student due to demographics or ability classifications.
- The staff intentionally builds a positive, student-focused school culture that is lived in all parts of the school community. This includes not just a strong mission, vision and values, but also intentional norms that are upheld across the school defining expectations for staff, students and parents.
- The school culture recognizes individual growth for students and celebrates that growth equally or at a higher degree than the traditional top performer honors. All students share a sense of feeling supported to reach their personal goals.
- Staff, teachers, administrators, and labor leaders trust one another and collaborate effectively improve students' outcomes. Students also express confidence and trust in their staff, teachers, and administrators.
- There is a high level of morale among staff. Staff and students share a strong sense of school pride and belongingness.
- School has appropriate and effective disciplinary policies that promote student reflection and learning.
- Surveys, focus groups, and other strategies are used to get obtain student input into campus issues that are important to students and on instructional quality.
- Students feel and are safe on campus, as well as on their way to and from school. Their learning environment is free from bullying and violence, and they are made to feel comfortable being themselves at school.
- All areas of the campus are clean, well-maintained, and functionally optimized.
- School security personnel and all classified staff are valued as key stakeholders, adequately trained, and are included in regular staff meetings and teacher professional development. They uphold the school's norms and have input on appropriate issues concerning staff and students.



WestEd views this characteristic as the glue that binds together all of the other characteristics in our approach. WestEd works to facilitate school culture shifts that work to directly connect the mission, vision, values, and goals of the school to the practiced and reinforced norms for leaders, teachers, students and parents.

## **8. Family Engagement**

### **a. Meaningful partnerships with parents**

WestEd ensures that parent leaders are present at the needs assessment results presentation and prioritization of recommendations. Their voice has been found to be essential in setting the first steps in seeking rapid and sustainable change. Building effective family-school collaboration requires that schools set in place the conditions that allow each partner to develop the confidence, skills, and trust necessary to work together to produce significant learning and achievement gains for each student.

As such, partners get the support needed to ensure:

- Families and students are active participants in the life of the school, and feel welcomed, valued and connected to each other, to school staff, and to what students are learning and doing in class. Schools provide teachers and staff with regular professional development that build capacity to develop meaningful relationships based on trust and mutual respect.
- Families are personally invited and strongly encouraged to participate in student-centered activities organized by the school faculty (e.g., newsletter, school marquee, phone call, flyer, robo-call, internet posting). Their role and responsibilities in the activity are clearly outlined and explained. Communication should be available in the home language.
- School faculty receives training and coaching to effectively collaborate with families to drive student learning and performance. Teachers and staff feel confident in their ability to engage families. Adequate time is allocated for planning meaningful parent-teacher collaboration.
- Based on up-to-date aggregate and individual student performance data, families, teachers and students collaboratively set academic goals and create individual student action plans, including student learning opportunities beyond the academic school day (e.g., after school programs, tutoring, summer school, internship, sports camps).
- Educators coach and train families in the learning skills necessary to meet the students' academic goals. School staff ensures that families have the necessary information, skills, and confidence to support student learning at home.
- Student learning and performance is a shared responsibility between families and schools. Parents and caretakers make learning and high expectations a family priority by actively seeking information, resources and training that support their own ability to lead and support a home learning environment.
- The school connects students, families, and staff to expanded learning opportunities, community services, and civic participation. The school invites key community partners to assist in reaching individual student goals.
- All families are assisted with preparation for college. Financial aid opportunities, college options that match student needs, opportunities to meet with college representatives (how to prepare for that and questions to ask).

WestEd understands that this takes a great deal of professional development, coaching, and support to bring about change in districts and schools. WestEd has experience with this across the country in rural

and large urban schools, with those that had strong parent and community engagement processes already, in addition to those that previously shunned such practices as described above. WestEd, in collaboration with district and school leadership, develops a differentiated approach based on activities and practices already in place to ensure parents are seen as partners and allies in students reaching their goals.

WestEd staff have developed an approach to effective family engagement, which has shown tremendous impact on student achievement. Academic Parent-Teacher Teams (APTT) is an intentional, systematic means of increasing student academic achievement by improving the quality and quantity of parent-teacher communication and interaction. Teachers coach parents to become engaged, knowledgeable members of the academic team in three classroom APTT meetings and one in-depth individual conference each year. APTT provides teachers and families a time and place to share student performance data and set achievable and measurable, student-centered academic goals. APTT professional development provides district and/or school staff with a new vision for family engagement and the knowledge, tools, and strategies necessary to collaborate with families to improve student performance. To read more about APTT, see *Attachment H: Academic Parent Teacher Teams Brochure*, or visit [www.wested.org/aptt](http://www.wested.org/aptt).

#### **b. Engaging parents, guardians, and family members**

WestEd's APTT program is a national example of best practices in engaging parents, guardians, and family members as educational partners, as mentioned above.

#### **c. Employing system-wide systems to listen to and communicate with parents about expectations for student learning**

WestEd's APTT program is a national example of building highly effective systems across a district and school site on communicating with parents about expectations for student learning, as mentioned above.

#### **d. Aligning with the research of Dr. Joyce Epstein of John Hopkins University**



WestEd's characteristic of *Powerful Engagement of Families & Communities* is built in part from Dr. Epstein's research (2001, 2002) and more. WestEd has experience in building statewide frameworks defining parent engagement, including our work with the California Department of Education, and key stakeholders, in developing the California Family Engagement Framework (FEF) (2011). Staff from WestEd's California Comprehensive Center drew heavily from Dr. Epstein's School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Your Handbook for Action (2002) in developing the FEF.

WestEd can customize parent engagement strategies to ensure strong alignment with the district and school's priorities for parent engagement.

## **9. Turnaround Partner Staffing and Qualifications**

### **a. Full Time Equivalent (FTE) positions**

WestEd has provided in this proposal two example Scopes of Work. One cost scenario for a lead turnaround partnership (\$170,000 per year) and the second cost scenario (\$220,000 per year) vary depending on the needs of a particular school. In both cases, one School Turnaround Facilitator is dedicated to be on the campus of the school 80% of the school year as the primary lead. In both cases, the school will receive up to 11 days of support services from senior staff such as the Director of the School Turnaround Center and the Associate Director of the School Turnaround Center. All other operation staffing is also included. In the second cost scenario, the school also receives selected specialists from services like those described in this proposal (LAPDS, APTT, *Achievement for All*, etc.) for up to 24 days onsite during the school year and/or summer. For more detail, please see *Attachment I: Low and High SOWs*.

### **b. Qualifications of organization personnel**

WestEd has a network of people with significant expertise relevant to meeting the needs of chronically low-performing schools, such as improving student literacy skills, working with English learners and students with disabilities, creating local accountability plans, mentoring and coaching new teachers, and promoting resilience and youth development. Based on the results of the schoolwide needs analysis, WestEd's school transformation teams (and the respective school sites) will be able draw on these resources as necessary. Please see *Attachment J: Staff Bios and Resumes* for detailed biographies and resumes for key staff.